Royal visit to CPD training facility

It was pomp and ceremony time at 125 Grays Inn Road as the UCL Eastman Continuing Professional Development team prepared to welcome HRH the Princess Royal, Princess Anne.

The visit was to officially open the new state of the art clinical teaching facility and unveil a plaque to commemorate the occasion.

The new facility is based on the fourth floor of the UCL Eastman CPD building and comprises five new dental chairs equipped with microscopes and digital radiography, a cone beam scanner, a skills laboratory and a lecture facility.

There was a great presence from the dental community for the visit from academics and lecturers to students and dental suppliers who had fitted out the facility.

The official part of the day began with a programme of speeches to put the new facility in the context of furthering knowledge and stimulating excellence in education. Prof Andrew Eder, director at UCL Eastman CPD, began the programme with a presentation of the background of what the school had achieved since its establishment in 1999 with regards to continuous professional development and the focus on a quality educational experience.

Prof Eder said: “Much as Anton Chekhov’s character Trofimov is described as a ‘perpetual student’, dental professionals are now finding themselves in an arena where it is necessary to constantly learn and update their skills.

“Since its inception in 1999, the CPD facility here has strived to maintain a level of intellectual stimulation for students and create a highly sought after quality learning experience. We are confident that the recent investment into the new clinical facility will enable us to continue fulfilling that aim.”

Prof Eder was also keen to point out the practical applications the facility would have, having announced the fact that UCL Eastman had been appointed by the IOC (International Olympic Committee) to provide dental care to the 2012 London Olympic Games.

UCL Eastman Dental Institute director Prof Stephen Porter then spoke about the importance of collaboration in the development and delivery of preventative measure for patients not only of today but also tomorrow. Commenting on the challenges facing the dental profession, Prof Porter spoke about the need for education and the implementation of innovative programmes to meet the needs of a diverse population.

The Chief Dental Officer Dr Barry Cockcroft CBE also said a few words, highlighting the synergy between the visions of both the Department of Health and UCL Eastman CPD in focusing on education and prevention, and applauding the universities for their investment in research, training and care which enhances the level of patient care and the experience for the dental professionals delivering that care.

Then it was the turn of HRH Princess Anne. Known for her dislike of long speeches, she spoke of the need to stay up to date with the latest thinking, and rising above the challenges armed with the best information possible. She also spoke about the need to sell the good news to patients about what they need to maintain great oral health, while also recognising that one fundamental challenge is to get the people who could benefit most from dental care to access it appropriately.

Wrapping up the speeches was Prof Malcolm Grant CBE, UCL President and Provost. He emphasised the importance of the joining of UCL and the Eastman together, especially in the field of interdisciplinary research. He stated that they all had a mission to make a difference to patients, and it was the universities that held the key to driving investment and recovery in the UK.

The Princess was then taken on a tour of both the old and new clinical skills facility, meeting with staff and graduates before unveiling the commemorative plaque and signing the visitor’s book. She was then presented with a posy by Deborah Eder as a token of appreciation from UCL Eastman CPD.

It was a great day for UCL Eastman CPD and having visited the new facility I was extremely impressed with the quality and attention to detail in the design. Even the skills laboratory had made the highest use of space with student’s needs in mind (although being in there did allow me to rediscover my fear of phantom heads). I look forward to visiting the facility again and hearing about the work UCL Eastman CPD are doing for dental education.